

A Study on Women in Kerala's Government Employment as Catalysts for Women-Led Economic Growth

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Abstract

Despite high educational attainment among women, Kerala continues to face a paradox of low female labour force participation (FLFP), even as public sector employment remains a key avenue for formal job security. This paper analyses the distribution of women employees across different levels of government in Kerala from 2018 to 2023, linking their representation to the broader framework of women-led economic growth. The paper argues that secure government jobs enhance women's economic empowerment, reduce educated unemployment, and stimulate household and regional development—key pillars of women-led growth. However, persistent gender gaps in higher-level positions and central services highlight structural barriers. The research concludes that expanding women's access to leadership positions in public administration and aligning employment policies with gender-responsive strategies are critical for unlocking inclusive and sustainable economic growth in Kerala.

Keywords: Female representation, Government employment, Economic growth, Decision-making, Inclusive growth.

I INTRODUCTION

In public employment, one aspect of inclusive development and social progress is ensuring gender equality. As a state that has achieved high levels of literacy and educational development, along with human development, Kerala has been a state that has long promoted women's entry into the labor market with particular emphasis on government jobs. Nonetheless, the degree and display of women's representation within the administrative structure of government is a significant area of research.

Women can be found throughout government departments or services. However, the prevalence of female employees may vary depending on their role within the organization. That is in, entry-level employees, mid-level managerial or administrative employees, and senior decision-making roles. Therefore, understanding the distribution of women within public sector is important in determining whether women are provided with equal opportunity, leadership positions, and promotion in the public sector. Further, this distribution may identify existing discrepancies within the representation of women in government and the extent to which these discrepancies impact the inclusivity and efficiency of governance.

Thus, the aim of the study is to determine the extent to which women's representation exists within the hierarchical structure of government employment, and to provide an understanding of gender inequalities in the public sector.

II SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In order to achieve gender equality in the public sector, policymakers and administrators need to have a better understanding of how women are represented within the Kerala government, through analyzing their participation rates in various decision-making capacities, as well as establishing whether or not women receive equal opportunities for growth in terms of job advancement and leadership positions.

The results of this research can be used by administrators, policymakers, and other stakeholders in order to create gender-responsive public employment policies. In addition to helping policymakers develop gender-responsive employment policies, this study also supports current efforts to promote inclusive governance by demonstrating that equal representation of women and men in public sector positions should be considered paramount. Ultimately, this research contributes to enhancing women's empowerment and to ensuring that the Kerala public service embraces the ideals of fairness and equity, as well as the right to equal opportunity.

III OBJECTIVE

To analyze the distribution of women employees across different administrative and decision-making levels within the government sector in Kerala

IV METHODOLOGY

The research employs a descriptive approach to gather information regarding the participation and representation of women at all levels of hierarchy within the government of Kerala. This research will use only secondary data sources to gather this information and to analyze how women's participation and representation impact broader society. All of the secondary data used in this research will be sourced from *The Kerala Economic Review*. This study used five years of data from 2018 to 2023. The research will provide information to detect trends, disparities, and patterns related to the employee population within the government sector of Kerala.

V ANALYSIS

In Kerala, during the year 2018-19 (Table 1), the Overall Count of all Government workers was 5,60,619. Of these total numbers, 1,93,807 were female, representing 34.6% of the entire workforce. The State Government had the highest percentage at a 40.1% female representation, or 1,05,004 female employees. The Central Government had the lowest percentage with only 24.4% female employees. The Local Self Government Institutions (LSGI) made up 36.8% of the female representation.

Table 1 Distribution of women employees in different levels of government in Kerala 2018 – 2019

Type of Government	Total	Women	Percentage to total
Central Govt	59924	14594	24.4
State Govt	262046	105004	40.1
Central Quasi	82154	25828	31.4
State Quasi	131597	39218	29.8
LSGI	24898	9163	36.8
Total	560619	193807	34.6

Source: Economic Review 2020

Table 2 shows that during the financial year 2019-20 the total employee count was slightly down (554,919), yet the number of female employees increased slightly to 34.8 percent (193,224). The State Government had the greatest proportion of female representation at 40.2 percent with a total of 104,628 females employed. The Local Self Government Institutions (LSGI) continued to have a robust female percentage (37.3 percent). The Central Government continued to be low compared to other sectors (24.59 percent).

Table 2 Distribution of women employees in different levels of government in Kerala 2019 – 2020

Type of Government	Total	Women	Percentage to total
Central Govt	59971	14745	24.59
State Govt	260170	104628	40.2
Central Quasi	80800	25968	32.1
State Quasi	129290	38666	29.9
LSGI	24688	9217	37.3
Total	554919	193224	34.8

Source: Economic Review 2021

Table 3 is given the distribution of women employees in 2020-21. There were 556,634 employees in the total workforce. There were 194,080 (or 34.86%) women with stable growth as compared to the previous year. Women continued to be the largest percentage (40.7%) of employees in the State Government sector with 105,567 employees. There were 31.42% women employees in the Central Quasi sector.

Table 3 Distribution of women employees in different levels of government in Kerala 2020 – 2021

Type of Government	Total	Women	Percentage to total
Central Govt	60003	14716	24.52
State Govt	259239	105567	40.7
Central Quasi	80635	25341	31.42
State Quasi	131480	39172	29.79
LSGI	25277	9284	36.72
Total	556634	194020	34.86

Source: Economic Review 2022

The 2021-2022 data from Table 4 shows that as of March 31, 2021, there were 556,933 employees in the total government workforce. Of that total workforce, 34.85% or 194,136 employees identified as female. The State Government had the largest percentage of females (40.72%) as compared to the Central Government (24.51%), which has had consistently inferior representation of females since 1980.

Table 4 Distribution of women employees in different levels of government in Kerala 2021 – 2022

Type of Government	Total	Women	Percentage to total
Central Govt	60063	14726	24.51
State Govt	259339	105627	40.72
Central Quasi	80736	25391	31.44
State Quasi	131372	39120	29.77
LSGI	25296	9272	36.65
Total	556933	194136	34.85

Source: Economic Review 2023

Table 5 shows that the total number of employees for fiscal year 2022-2023, was 5,57,495 and out of that there was a record of 1,94,323 female employees. The State Government has the highest female employment with 1,05,711 female employees. The Local Self Government Institutions (LSGI) reported a total of 9,272 female employees indicating a strong female presence within Local Self Governments (LSGIs).

Table 5 Distribution of women employees in different levels of government in Kerala 2022 – 2023

Type of Government	Total	Women	Percentage to total
Central Govt	60215	14751	24.49
State Govt	259560	105711	40.72
Central Quasi	80812	25407	31.43
State Quasi	131614	39182	29.77
LSGI	25294	9272	36.65
Total	557495	194323	34.85

Source: Economic Review 2024

VI FINDINGS

- Highest representation in State Government:

Women constitute over 40% of State Government employees, rising from 40.1% (2018–2019) to 40.72% (2021–2022 and 2022–2023). This is the highest share among all categories, indicating strong female presence in state-run departments and public sector undertakings.

- Lowest representation in Central Government:

Despite stability in numbers, women make up only 24.5% of Central Government employees in Kerala. This suggests structural underrepresentation in federal services such as railways, defence, and central ministries.

- Local Self-Government Institutions (LSGI) show high female share:

LSGI (Panchayats, Municipalities) report 36.65% to 37.3% women employees, reflecting the impact of gender reservation policies in local governance. This level serves as a critical entry point for women into formal public employment.

- Quasi-Government Sectors Lag:

In Central Quasi, Women's share stabilizes around 31.4%

State Quasi (e.g., PSUs, boards), share remains low at 29.8%, indicating gender gaps in semi-autonomous bodies.

- Overall Trend:

The total percentage of women across all government levels increased slightly from 34.6% (2018–2019) to 34.85% (2022–2023), showing marginal improvement but persistent underrepresentation relative to their share in education and job-seeking populations.

VII CONCLUSION

While Kerala demonstrates progressive inclusion in state and local government jobs, underrepresentation in central and quasi-government sectors remains a barrier. Expanding recruitment, promoting vertical mobility, and strengthening gender equity policies can amplify the role of public employment in driving women-led economic growth. High female employment in state and local governments contributes directly to household income, financial autonomy, and intergenerational welfare- thus contribute to Economic empowerment and economic growth. Women in LSGIs and state roles enhance gender-responsive governance, influencing health, education, and social welfare outcomes. To conclude, expanding women's access to leadership roles and strengthening gender-responsive employment policies are essential to transforming public sector representation into sustained, inclusive economic transformation.

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